Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Business Plan

2008-2009

March 2, 2008

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Message from the Minister and the Acting Director & CEO

The business plan for the 2008-2009 fiscal year provides the public with an overview of the major priorities and goals for the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (NSHRC) in the coming year.

During the 2008-2009 fiscal year, the NSHRC will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of its policies and procedures to ensure that constant improvement remains a hallmark of its work. The guiding principle will continue to be providing the best service possible to Nova Scotians while making efficient use of resources.

The vision of seeing Nova Scotia become a centre of excellence in human rights continues to motivate commissioners, staff and management at the NSHRC.

Hon. Cecil Clarke
Minister Responsible for the N.S. Human Rights Act

Michael Noonan
Acting Director & CEO

A. Mission

To reduce individual and systemic discrimination in support of a society characterized by equality. We value:

Respect and dignity, through words and actions in relation to all members of the public;
Diversity, recognizing everyone can contribute to our society;
Understanding, through education as a focal point for change;
Credibility, in being seen as independent and truly autonomous from government, and;
Integrity, in practicing what we preach and in serving as a model for government, other agencies and the private sector.

B. Link to the Corporate Path

The provincial government has established a vision through its corporate path which it describes as *Building for Families, Building for the Future*. The mission, priorities and goals of the NSHRC seek to guide Nova Scotian businesses, communities and individuals in a direction that will ensure that respect for human rights is a hallmark of this overall vision.

In particular, the work which is done to help employers more effectively manage and promote diversity within their workplaces encourages opportunities for all Nova Scotians, including newcomers to our province, to contribute to our social and economic progress. This means that services and employment opportunities should be accessible to everyone, ensuring a bright future for all communities.

C. Planning Context

The NSHRC currently employs 23 people and has four offices: a central office in Halifax and regional offices in Sydney, Digby and New Glasgow.

The NSHRC is an independent government agency charged with administering Nova Scotia's *Human Rights Act* (hereinafter referred to as "the *Act*"), a provincial statute created in 1969. Under the authority of the *Act*, the NSHRC focuses on the following core business functions:

- effectively resolving complaints of discrimination;
- promoting systemic change through education, training and affirmative action programs; and
- influencing the development of legislation and policy by government.

A key challenge for the NSHRC in the coming fiscal year will be the search for a new Director and CEO following the departure of Mayann Francis in the latter half of the 2006-2007 fiscal year. The senior leadership team and staff of the NSHRC remain committed to maintaining efficient and effective service to the public during this transitional phase. The NSHRC will also continue to meet challenges and explore opportunities for collaboration under the guidance of its Acting Director and CEO, Michael Noonan.

The core businesses operate in the rapidly evolving field of human rights and within a tight fiscal environment. Therefore, the NSHRC has continued to invest resources in ongoing staff training and seeks partners from the public, private and non-governmental sectors as it delivers its public education and consultation programs.

The Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion Division focuses on the core business activity of promoting systemic change in the public and private sectors. Since 1999, the Division has implemented a cost-recovery program for its workshops and training services as it continues to focus on organizational change initiatives promoting equity and inclusion. Special training projects have been undertaken for staff and management with Convergys Customer Management, the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation, Saint Mary's University, the Nova Scotia Community College and the South Shore Regional School Board. In the year ahead, the Division will continue to expand its reach with additional staff resources and promotion of its activities to outside clients.

During the 2008-2009 fiscal year, the NSHRC will continue to make the best possible use of its human and financial resources. This will ensure that the needs of Nova Scotians can be effectively met and the NSHRC's vision of a Nova Scotia characterized by enhanced equity and respect for difference is advanced.

D. Strategic Goals

Goals for the NSHRC in 2008-2009 are:

1. To promote efficient, effective and timely resolutions for complaints of discrimination.

2. To promote systemic change by developing new tools and resources which support the NSHRC's mandate to educate organizations and individuals about the impact of discrimination.

3. To help foster the development of a more equitable society and fair workplaces by effectively addressing discrimination in all its forms.

E. Core Business Areas

The NSHRC's core businesses reflect the goals and priorities that are part of the organization's strategic outlook. Included with this section are the performance measures which have been developed for each core business for the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

Effectively Resolving Complaints of Discrimination:

- Delivered collaboratively through the Investigation and Compliance and Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion divisions.
- Attempts settlement initiatives at all stages of the complaint process in accordance with the *Act* and Commission policies.
- Investigates complaints of discrimination (e.g., approximately 220 active files in 2007-2008) and recommends options for resolution to the Commissioners.
- Establishes best practices for addressing systemic discrimination in collaboration with the Coordinator of Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion.

Promoting Systemic Change Through Education, Training and Affirmative Action Programs:

- Involves the staff of the Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion and Investigation and Compliance divisions and the Office of the Director and CEO.
- Develops and maintains effective links with government, business, the legal community, schools, agencies and community groups to raise awareness of human rights issues and compliance with the Act.
- Undertakes communication initiatives aimed at increasing the Commission's public profile.
- Provides education and training programs in workplaces, schools and other settings such as a five-day Train-the-Trainer module for workplace educators.
- Ensures cost-recovery in service delivery wherever possible.
- Identifies emerging issues and targets skill development for NSHRC staff in collaboration with the Manager of Investigation and Compliance.
- Promotes opportunities for all Nova Scotians by working with employers to develop innovative agreements that promote diversity in hiring and promotion.
- Recognizes positive role models in business and the community who take leadership in promoting diversity.

Influencing the Development of Legislation and Policy by Government

- Led by the Office of the Director and CEO with input from the Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion and Investigation and Compliance divisions.
- Promotes consideration by government of the human rights implications of planned legislative and policy initiatives.
- Briefs government on emerging trends in human rights at the provincial, national and international level.
- Conducts research on the potential impacts of government legislation and policy on disadvantaged groups protected under the Act.
- Builds knowledge and expertise within the NSHRC on trends, landmark court cases and key developments in other provincial and federal jurisdictions.

F. Priorities and Performance Measures for 2008-2009

Priorities identified by the NSHRC for 2008-2009 are:

Effectively Resolving Complaints of Discrimination

- In cooperation with Mi'kmaq and other aboriginal communities, move forward with recommendations to develop of an aboriginal framework to improve the services the NSHRC offers to these communities, particularly through the development of effective models of dispute resolution.

  Measure: Percentage of cases resolved within 6 months of receipt of intake questionnaire.

- Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the NSHRC's settlement initiative practices and its mediation roster.

  Measure: Percentage of cases resolved within 6 months of receipt of intake questionnaire.

- Ensure that priorities and strategic goals are reflected in performance management targets for staff and management.

  Measure: Percentage of investigations completed within 12 months of receipt of intake questionnaire.

- Develop a strategic plan for the Investigation and Compliance Division to ensure ongoing change management and quality control.

  Measure: Percentage of cases resolved within 24 months of receipt of intake questionnaire.

- Continue to evaluate the computerized case management system to improve the tracking and quality control of the complaint process.

  Measure: Percentage of cases resolved within 24 months of receipt of intake questionnaire.

Promoting Systemic Change Through Education, Training and Affirmative Action Programs:

- Continue involvement with government, institutional and community partners to further develop linkages and forums for discussion and change.

  Measure: Increase the number of "Champions for the Workplace" breakfasts

- Complete the recruitment process for additional staffing resources for the Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion Division to augment the NSHRC's education, training and affirmative action programs.

  Measure: Percentage of training and consultation requests accepted.

- Promote the value of practicing inclusion to the business community using the NSHRC's "Champions for the Workplace" program to identify two new champions during 2007-2008 who would host a breakfast for their colleagues.

  Measure: Increase the number of "Champions for the Workplace" breakfasts.

- Continue policy research and development in partnership with external organizations in emerging areas of human rights.

  Measure: Increase the number of strategic partners.

- Complete the implementation of a Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion Division module as part of the Commission's computerized case management system.

  Measure: Percentage of training and consultation requests accepted.

- Promote the NSHRC as a source of information and resources on human rights and compliance issues under the *Act* for employers and employees in the public, private, educational and not-for-profit sectors.

  Measure: Percentage of training and consultation requests accepted.

Influencing the Development of Legislation and Policy by Government

- Complete the recruitment of a Senior Policy Analyst.
  Measure: Number of consultation request from Treasury and Policy Board.

- Deliver presentations on trends and concerns to government and opposition caucuses in conjunction with the filing of the NSHRC's annual report.
  Measure: Number of consultation request from Treasury and Policy Board.

- Open dialogue with staff of Treasury and Policy Board to incorporate consideration of human rights implications into the process for developing legislative recommendations for Cabinet.
  Measure: Number of consultation request from Treasury and Policy Board.

G. Human Resources

As with all provincial government departments and agencies, the NSHRC seeks to support the goals and strategies outlined in the corporate human resource strategy established by the Public Service Commission. In keeping with the intent of the plan to make the provincial government an employer of choice for Nova Scotians, the NSHRC has undertaken the following steps:

- created a comprehensive orientation guide for new employees;
- conducted an anonymous self-identification census to identify the equity groups within the workplace;
- held discussions with staff to identify practices for peer dispute resolution; and
- initiated a CEO's Award to recognize achievements by staff.

In the 2008-2009 fiscal year, the NSHRC will undertake the following activities in support of the corporate plan:

- complete and publicize its own affirmative action plan to ensure diversity within the workplace;
- open discussions with the Pubic Service Commission and its bargaining units to reaffirm their commitment to affirmative action within its own workforce; and
- host a Summer Diversity placement.

H. Budget Context

Human Rights Commission			
	2007-2008 Estimate ($thousands)	**2007-2008 Forecast** ($thousands)	**2008-2009 Forecast** ($thousands)
Net Expenses	2,105	2,049	2,105
Funded Staff (FTEs)	25.6	25.6	25.6

Schedule 1

Core Business: Effectively Resolving Complaints of Discrimination					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA Base Year - 2006-2007**	**TARGET 2008-2009**	**TARGET 2009-2010**	**Strategic Actions to achieve target**
An efficient and effective complaint handling process	**Percentage of intake questionnaires assessed within 2 months**	**80%**	**80%**	**85%**	**- Update intake policies and procedures to reflect amendments to the *Act* and recommendations of Aboriginal framework to assist with efficient and culturally sensitive response - Conduct training with staff on above - Continue to enhance intake team approach and emphasize early resolution where possible**
	Percentage of cases resolved within 6 months of receipt of intake questionnaire	**30%**	**30%**	**35%**	**- Continue to enhance intake team approach and emphasize early resolution where possible - Enhance knowledge of use of mediation to officers and the public through the Mediation Human Rights Officer (HRO) - Changes to the *Act* may lead to earlier decisions on status of case**

Core Business: Effectively Resolving Complaints of Discrimination					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA Base Year - 2006-2007**	**TARGET 2008-2009**	**TARGET 2009-2010**	**Strategic Actions to achieve target**
	Percentage of investigations completed within 12 months of receipt of intake questionnaire	**65%**	**65%**	**70%**	**- Develop strategies to enhance referrals to mediation - Monitor age of cases using computerized case management system. - Hire legal advisor to provide advice, guidance and training to officers in managing cases and developing strategies for making investigations more efficient without compromising integrity**
	Percentage of cases resolved within 24 months of receipt of intake questionnaire	**75%**	**75%**	**80%**	**- Monitor age of cases using computerized case management system. - Develop strategies to enhance referrals to mediation - Hire legal advisor to provide expertise and support to Manager in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of complaint process - Examine development of another settlement model to apply prior to proceeding to a Board of Inquiry**

Core Business: *Promoting Systemic Change Through Education, Training and Affirmative Action Programs*					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA Base Year - 2006-2007**	**TARGET 2008-2009**	**TARGET 2009-2010**	**Strategic Actions to achieve target**
NSHRC seen as an authoritative source for information about human rights.	**Percentage of training and consultation requests accepted.**	**70% for Consults 50 % for Training**	**75% for Consults 60% for Training**	**80% for Consults 70% Training**	**- Develop a strategic plan for delivery of training and consultation services including increases in human resources and partnering with other agencies**
	Percentage of clients satisfied with new training module: *Creating Cultural and Organizational Change*	**NA**	**80%**	**85%**	**- Update the five day train-the-trainer course based on a comprehensive review and consultation with select employers to develop and deliver a current and relevant training product**
	Increase the number of "Champions for the Workplace" breakfasts	**1**	**2**	**4**	**- Create a communication plan to achieve better media coverage. - Improve linkages with local Chambers of Commerce.**

Core Business: *Promoting Systemic Change Through Education, Training and Affirmative Action Programs*					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA Base Year - 2006-2007**	**TARGET 2008-2009**	**TARGET 2009-2010**	**Strategic Actions to achieve target**
	Increase the number of strategic partners	**3**	**5**	**10**	**- Work with Partners for Human Rights - Establish new liaisons and linkages with academic and other organizations for training development and delivery**
	Percentage of Affirmative Action Agreements renewed within the 5 year standard	**20%**	**80%**	**90%**	**- implementation of new forms for auditing - monitoring of agreements through computerized case management system**
	Increase the number of new Affirmative Action Agreement	**0**	**2**	**4**	**- Educate organizations on the benefits of affirmative action through training on *Creating Cultural and Organizational Chang***

Core Business: *Promoting Systemic Change Through Education, Training and Affirmative Action Programs*					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA Base Year - 2006-2007**	**TARGET 2008-2009**	**TARGET 2009-2010**	**Strategic Actions to achieve target**
Human rights implications considered by government when developing policy and legislation	**Number of consultation request from Treasury and Policy Board**	**0**	**2**	**4**	**- Hire a senior policy analyst to carry out the policy framework - Compile a report on human rights policy issues and trends based on the results of an environmental scan and a review of the literature. - Conduct presentations with staff of Treasury and Policy Board and relevant provincial government departments on report findings.**